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ABSTRACT

Enrollment data confirmed that by fall of 1985, half of the 70 students enrolled in vocational teacher education coursework at Idaho State University (ISU) were involved in corporate training outside of vocational education. ISU's Vocational Teacher Education (VTE) Program has developed a new degree program for corporate trainers that maintains many of the same core requirements as the vocational teacher education degree, but deals with the differences primarily in the elective courses. The Bachelor's Degree in Corporate Training (CT) provides teaching skills for individuals who are career professionals in training and development. The university grants credit for work experience as part of this corporate training degree program. Students in the CT program earn credit for their technical experience in such areas as auto mechanics, merchandising, food service, data processing, and nuclear technology. The third component of the CT degree is composed of required and elective courses directed toward training. The new Master of Education Degree in Occupational Training Management (OTM) continues to build on an individual's training competencies by providing supervisory/managerial skills. Two options are available: vocational program management and industrial training management. Currently, enrollment in degree programs totals over 350 students, with the majority of these students selecting the corporate or industrial programs. Many vocational teachers have opted for CT or industrial OTM because these programs meet vocational certification requirements and provide them with greater flexibility should they return to the private sector. The vocational teacher education program at ISU has benefited by helping both corporate trainers and vocational teachers to establish contacts for cooperative efforts. (NLA)

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Technical Work Experience Vs. College Credit in Meeting

The Need for Technically Experienced Industry Trainers/Managers

American Association of Adult and Continuing Education
November 1, 1990
Salt Lake City, Utah
Emma M. Gebo and Mack W. Smith

Traditionally, the Vocational Teacher Education (VTE) Program at Idaho State University had provided certification courses for vocational teachers (particularly those teaching in the vocational program area of Trade and Industrial Education). For those teachers interested in pursuing degrees in addition to meeting certification requirements, the vocational teacher education faculty provided undergraduate and graduate degree programs. In 1984 it became apparent that corporate trainers were enrolling in our courses. In fact, in some of the off-campus courses they out numbered the vocational teachers who were enrolled primarily to meet certification requirements. This was intriguing, and consequently the vocational teacher education faculty decided to investigate the phenomenon and determine if a larger market was available for the courses offered.

At this same time, the Vocational Teacher Education program was moved out of the Department of Education and into a newly named department, Home Economics and Vocational Teacher Education. The new department was formed after careful study within the College of Education determined that there existed some duplication of effort and coursework between home economics education and vocational teacher education. Fiscally, having all of the vocational education supported programs within one department was also sound.

Enrollment checks confirmed that there was, in fact, a new client group coming into our a training supervisory position. By Fall of 1985, out of about 70 students enrolled in the vocational teacher education coursework (word of the program was beginning to spread rapidly among industry people) approximately half were involved in training outside of vocational education. This was a bit of a shock since the program had not been directed toward this group.

Even though similarities existed between the needs of corporate trainers and vocational teachers, it was also apparent that differences existed that needed to be addressed. It was felt that the best way to address these differences would be to propose two new degree programs for corporate trainers that maintained many of the same core requirements as the vocational teacher education degree but, dealt with the differences primarily in elective courses.

The Bachelor's Degree in Corporate Training (CT) provides teaching skills for individuals who are career professionals in training and development. Those presently enrolled in the CT program include individuals employed with the Idaho National Engineering Laboratory (a U.S Department of Energy supported laboratory dealing primarily with nuclear energy), the Idaho National Guard, law enforcement agencies, county and city government, as well as other private businesses and industries in the region. The courses that make up the core of this program provide skills common to the preparation of both vocational teachers and corporate trainers. However, the electives are flexible so that trainers can build a degree program based upon their career needs.

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Students enrolled in the Bachelor of Science degree program in Corporate Training must meet the General University Requirements of the University. Depending upon the individuals background in English and Math, the General University Requirements can be completed with 31 to 40 credits of coursework.

The second component of the degree program is the one we're sure many of you who are hear wanted to learn something abou. We are granting university level credit for work experience as a part of this corporate training degree program. Yes, as part of the degree.

The basis for granting University credit for work experience has existed for many years in the area of trade and industrial education as a part of vocational teacher education. Universities all across the country preparing vocational teachers for secondary and postsecondary schools, have granted blocks of credit to technicians for work experience, or a combination of vocational technical training and work experience. The rules and requirements have consistently stated that this credit is granted for technical specialization in an occupational area of specialization offered in a post-secondary vocational technical system, or in employee training programs in business and industry. Students in the CT program earn credit for their technical experience in such areas as auto mechanics, merchandising, food service, data processing, secretarial occupations, nuclear technology, health physics, and water/waste treatment.

The process requires that the work experience submitted by the student for credit must be fully documented, verified, and evaluated. A select committee of industry and educational representatives must evaluate the student's application portfolio prior to granting of the credit. The credit granted may be applied toward a Vocational Teacher Education or Corporate Training degree only.

The third component of the B.S. degree program in Corporate Training is composed of required and elective courses directed toward training. The coursework required is very comparable to that required for a vocational teacher education degree. As you can see, the courses focus on how people develop and learn, and how these concepts can then be utilized in planning, developing, delivering, and evaluating instruction.

The new Master of Education Degree in Occupational Training Management (OTM) continues to build on an individual's training competencies by providing supervisory/managerial skills. But, rather than having two separate degrees, there are two options. One option is for vocational program management, while the other is in industrial training management. The reason being that the core courses of the degree provide skills common to both vocational administrators and industrial training managers while the electives provide skills that depend upon a person's career goals.

There is enthusiastic support from local industries and public agencies that are involved with training. This is not surprising because their employees involved in the CT and OTM programs have communicated the fact that these programs are useful to them. As a result, many of the area's employers are willing to pay the educational costs for employees enrolled in these programs.

Currently, enrollment in degree programs is over 350 students with the majority of these students selecting the corporate or industrial programs. In fact, many vocational teachers have opted for CT or the Industrial option of OTM because these programs meet vocational certification requirements and provide them with greater flexibility should they return to the private sector.

The enrollment in the CT and OTM degree programs has had a significant impact upon Department, College, and University enrollment over the five year period. Credit hours generated within the Department of Home Economics and Vocational Teacher Education, over the five year period from fiscal year 1986 through 1990, have increased dramatically. The department has experienced an overall growth of 116.20 percent during that period.

The number of degrees granted within the Department of Home Economics and Vocational Teacher Education has also increased dramatically. The number of degrees granted has increased by over 88 percent during this same five year period, and indications are that as many students will graduate during 1990-91 as in the previous year.

Keep in mind that for a student to graduate, he or she must earn a total of at least 128 credits. Even though the bulk of these credits, (approximately 75 per student) are generated in the Department of Home Economics and Vocational Teacher Education, the Colleges of Arts and Sciences and Business have benefitted from these new students.

The Corporate Training coursework is delivered in the evenings, in both Pocatello and Idaho Falls -- a community 50 miles north of Pocatello. Evening delivery is critical because the students enrolled generally work full-time during the day and can take courses only at night. In fact, a profile of the "average" student might be interesting to you.

When we surveyed our students about 2 years ago we were able to obtain some information about the student enrolled in our CT, VTE, and OTM programs. The average student is 41 years of age, employed full-time, enrolled in 6 credits each semester, and an Idaho resident who intends to stay in Idaho following graduation. Students expect that it will take six or more years to complete the degree program because of the part-time enrollment factor.

Our students are employed by at least forty different employers in Southeastern Idaho. The employers are reimbursing some part, or all of, the educational cost for about 75% of the students enrolled. Business and industry has made a considerable commitment to this program.

The vocational teacher education program at ISU has benefited in many ways by serving the needs of corporate trainers and others in the public and private sectors. However, the benefits of extending service to corporate trainers has not only accrued to the vocational teacher education program but to others as well. Vocational teachers, and trainers are able to establish contacts with each other that promote better understanding between them and opens opportunities for cooperative efforts. Public vocational programs and corporate training programs both improve due to better prepared teachers and trainers. And, if the teachers and trainers are better prepared, those that they train will be better prepared to do the work business and industry hires them to do. The end result is a well trained work force, the ultimate goal for both vocational teachers and corporate trainers.

Occupational training of one kind or another has become a major factor in our society. Training is increasingly considered an essential part of successful business and industry ventures. Done correctly, training is cost effective. As such, those involved with industrial training feel a need to acquire the instructional management and teaching skills necessary to provide quality instruction to their "students". On a more personal level, the trainers view the earning of a college degree as a way of increasing their chances of being promoted within the organization.

Those involved with Vocational Teacher Education at Idaho State University feel that this new market for their expertise is exciting and important. There are individuals involved in training that need, want, and can benefit from the skills that vocational teacher educators can provide. Trainers and training departments should consider contacting a vocational or industrial teacher education program in their area to investigate how they might be able to cooperate and serve corporate trainers and their needs. What better way is there to promote the highly sought after cooperation between vocational education and the private sector than having vocational teachers and corporate trainers learning and working together in the classroom?!